

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 08062 231517Z

41

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 088103

O 231425Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 641

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 8062

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: STATE 286675

1. SUMMARY: KHADDAM AFFIRMED SYRIA WANTS AVOID ANY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON WHICH MIGHT THREATEN PEACE PROCESS. ARAB FORCES HAVE NO AUTHORITY FROM SUMMIT TO BE IN "SOUTH." BEST SOLUTION FOR SOUTHERN LEBANON IS TO ASSIST SARKIS TO QUICKLY SET UP LEBANESE FORCE TO OPERATE THERE. KHADDAM BELIEVES MEMBERS OF FORMER LEBANESE ARMY, THE 70 PERCENT WHICH SIMPLY RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES OVER PAST YEAR AND DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS MILITIAS, CAN BE QUICKLY REGROUPED. SARKIS COULD FIELD A FORCE OF UP TO 5,000 MEN WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE IS SUSPICIOUS OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS IN RAISING THIS ISSUE AND HOPES USG WILL CAREFULLY ASSESS ACTUAL FACTS OF SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. MET WITH KHADDAM TO CONVEY POINTS REFTTEL, SPEAKING IN YOUR NAME. THEN STATED THAT HE WOULD RECOGNIZE I WAS NOT CONVEYING A WARNING AS ISRAELI RADIO HAD BROADCAST IT HAS ASKED USG TO DO. OUR FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH SYRIA AND ISRAEL OVER PAST MONTHS HAD BEEN WITH VIEW OF SHARING OUR BEST ASSESSMENTS OF ATTITUDES OF RESPECTIVE PARTIES, PARTICULARLY WHERE ELEMENT OF

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 08062 231517Z

RISK INVOLVED.

3. KHADDAM THANKED YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE. HE THEN COMMENTED THAT THE DUTIES OF SYRIAN FORCES WITHIN THE ADF AND UNDER SARKIS' ORDERS WERE TO RESTORE SECURITY TO LEBANON. THESE FORCES HAVE NO OTHER FUNCTION.

4. SECOND POINT, KHADDAM SAID, WAS THAT ADF ARE NOT PRESENT IN "THE SOUTH" AND HAD NO MANDATE FROM ARAB SUMMIT TO OPERATE THERE. SITUATION, THEREFORE, NOT SUBJECT TO ADF CONTROL. SAID HE BELIEVED BEST METHOD TO END CONCERN ABOUT SOUTHERN LEBANON IS TO HELP SARKIS RAPIDLY FORM A LEBANESE MILITARY FORCE THAT COULD RESTORE SOVEREIGNTY OF LEBANESE STATE IN THAT REGION. SYRIA IS URGING SARKIS TO PROCEED ALONG THIS COURSE.

5. KHADDAM CONTINUED THAT SYRIA SUSPECTS THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS IN SOUTH AND ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON WHICH WILL TRY TO UNDERMINE THE PEACE PROCESS. ALL PARTIES WHETHER INSIDE LEBANON OR ABROAD MUST BE AWARE OF THIS AND TAKE CARE NOT TO HELP THESE DISSIDENTS REALIZE THEIR OBJECTIVE. HE THEN EMPHASIZED IT WAS NOT RPT NOT SYRIA'S INTENT TO TAKE ANY ACTION WHICH MIGHT IMPEDE EFFORTS TO REALIZE A JUST PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE REFERRED TO SYRIA'S DECISION TO EXTEND UNDOF. NOTED THAT ISRAEL'S EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT SOUTHERN LEBANON JUST AS SECURITY BEING RESTORED TO LEBANON MADE HIM SUSPICIOUS.

6. I TOLD HIM WE SHARED THE OBJECTIVE OF HELPING SARKIS EXERT HIS AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT LEBANON. BUT THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO CONFRONT SYRIA UNTIL SARKIS CAN FORM HIS NATIONAL FORCE. BEFORE SARKIS ESTABLISHES EFFECTIVE LEBANESE FORCE IN SOUTH, THOSE WHO WANT TO FRUSTRATE SYRIA'S EFFORTS TO RESTORE SECURITY TO LEBANON WILL HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SO. AS FAR AS ISRAELI SUSPICIONS OF SYRIA WERE CONCERNED, THESE WERE AS OF LONG STANDING AS THOSE OF SYRIA TOWARDS ISRAEL. BUT ISRAELI SUSPICIONS HAD BEEN RECENTLY STIRRED BY DECISION OF RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMITS TO "IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORDS." THIS WAS BEING INTERPRETED AS GIVING PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE A HUNTING LICENSE TO RESUME IN FULL FORCE THEIR CROSS BORDER ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH LEBANON. THOUGH ONE MAY UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THE SYRIAN FORCES WITHIN THE ADF IN TERMS KHADDAM
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 08062 231517Z

HAD DESCRIBED IT, SYRIA MUST REALIZE THAT DEEP ROOTED SUSPICIONS IN ISRAEL ABOUT DAMASCUS' INTENTIONS ARE ONCE AGAIN AFLAME. THEREFORE WHAT MIGHT BEST BE DONE IN THIS IMMEDIATE TIME FRAME TO MAINTAIN SECURITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON?

7. KHADDAM REPEATED SYRIAN FORCES WERE NOT PRESENT IN THE SOUTH; THEREFORE, THE BEST PROCEDURE IS TO HELP SARKIS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE ESTABLISH A LEBANESE FORCE TO FILL THE EXISTING

VACUUM. SARKIS COULD DO THIS IN NEAR FUTURE. SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE OFFICERS FROM FORMER LEBANESE ARMY HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN THE FIGHTING. FROM THIS GROUP AND FROM THE ENLISTED PERSONNEL WHO HAD SIMILARLY STAYED AT HOME, SARKIS COULD FIELD 4,000 TO 5,000 LEBANESE TROOPS TO FILL VACUUM IN SOUTH IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

8. FONMIN THEN REITERATED THAT MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE IN THE AREA MUST BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO SUCCEED. SYRIA DID NOT RPT NOT ENTER LEBANON TO CLASH WITH ISRAEL. HAD IT WANTED A CONFRONTATION IT COULD HAVE EASILY ARRANGED ONE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. IN HIS OPINION, ANY MILITARY ACTION TAKEN BY ISRAEL IN THE NAME OF PRESERVING SECURITY ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER WOULD BE MERELY A PLOY, AND SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD SO BY WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.

9. ASKED KHADDAM WHAT HE MEANT BY "THE SOUTH", NOTING THAT LEBANESE PRESS SAID ADF WOULD SEND SMALL FORCE TO PORT OF TYRE IN NEXT FEW DAYS. KHADDAM REPLIED HE HAD NO CLEAR (GEOGRAPHIC) LINE IN MIND. ADF MIGHT DECIDE TO SEND 100 MEN TO TYRE TO RESTORE SECURITY WITHIN THE TOWN BUT THERE WAS NO LEGITIMATE CAUSE FOR ISRAELI CONCERN AND "WE BELIEVE ISRAEL MAY BE AIMING AT UNDERMINING THE PEACE PROCESS IN LEBANON." HE HOPED THE U.S. APPRECIATED THIS POINT. SYRIA SEES NO ACUTE PROBLEMS IN THE SOUTH TODAY DESPITE "THE EXISTENCE OF CERTAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARIOUS FACTIONS."

10. I ASKED KHADDAM IF HE KNEW WHO WAS BEHIND THE NAHARIYA ATTACK. HE SAID HE HAD NO INFORMATION ABOUT THIS, BUT NOTED THAT IF ATTACK INVOLVED USE OF KATYUSHA ROCKET SUCH COULD BE CARRIED ABOUT IN A SUITCASE. AT THIS VERY MOMENT THERE COULD BE SOMEONE IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS CARRYING THE SAME TYPE OF ROCKET WHICH HE COULD LAUNCH WITHIN THE CITY WITHOUT BEING DISCOVERED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 08062 231517Z

BEFOREHAND.

11. ASKED IF THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO CONTROL SUCH INCIDENTS, KHADDAM REPLIED THAT SARG'S RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO NORMAL AND DAMASCUS WAS ACCORDINGLY SOMEWHAT OUT OF TOUCH. HOWEVER, THERE WERE SERIOUS GROUNDS TO DOUBT THAT THE PALESTINIAN CENTRAL AUTHORITY ANY LONGER COULD COMMAND RESPECT FROM THE MEMBERSHIP. THE MOVEMENT WAS SO SPLIT AND SUBJECT TO INFLUENCES BOTH FROM OTHER ARABS AND NON-ARAB COUNTRIES THAT IT COULD SCARCELY STILL BE CALLED A MOVEMENT. FONMIN CONCLUDED THAT SYRIA BELIEVED USG HAD GREAT RESPONSIBILITY TO ASSESS THE SITUATION IN SOUTHER LEBANON CAREFULLY AND UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS NEEDED TO PREVENT IT FROM UNDERMINING THE PEACE PROCESS. I REPLIED IT WAS JUST FOR THIS REASON WE WANTED THIS EXCHANGE WITH SYRIA.

KHADDAM THEN REEMPHASIZED, "WE WANT TO EXPLOSIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON. THERE ARE HOPEFUL SIGNS FOR POLITICAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE IN THE AREA IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND WE DO NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT DAMAGE THESE FAVORABLE SIGNS."

12. COMMENT: FONMIN SPOKE CALMLY AND DISPASSIONATELY THROUGHOUT. HIS PREDICTION THAT A LEBANESE ARMY COULD BE RAPIDLY RECREATED AND TAKE OVER SECURITY IN SOUTH LEBANON STRIKES ME AS UNREALISTIC BUT ALSO AS AN INTERESTING ECHO OF ISRAELI DESIRES, AT LEAST AS EXPRESSED IN THEIR PRESS COMMENTARIES. HE PROBABLY WAS SIMPLY SHOOTING FROM THE HIP IN MAKING THIS PREDICTION, PARTICULARLY GIVEN HIS FREQUENT PAST DESCRIPTIONS OF FORMER LEBANESE ARMY AS INEPT, CONFESSIONAL-RIDDEN OUTFIT. HIS PREDICTION OF ITS REINCARNATION, HOWEVER, MAY ALSO REFLECT HIS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS, OCCUPATION FORCES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC08062
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760435-1273
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761124/aaaaatsv.tel
Line Count: 176
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 286675
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006